

# Critical Choices



# Chronicles of Culture

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# Critical Choices



*Two elements are needed to form a truth—a fact and  
an abstraction—*

—Rémy de Gourmont

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## Comment

The ambient incoherence of our reality is discounted by many as the classic illusion of changing times. The past always appears ordered, they say, the present chaotic. Astigmatic perspectives are certainly a fact of life, but I can remember times when things fell into congruity when someone honestly tried to arrange them. Epochs of all-encompassing incoherence are a part of history, but they do not constitute an organic element of existence.

The current wave of incoherence, I would tend to attribute to the preponderance of magazines. Their power seems underestimated, they are mostly perceived as a countless, blabbing family related to two boorish giants—the daily press and TV. Whether or not the giants listen to them—and they do indeed—the synergic impact of news-opinion-leisure and popcultural magazines on the popular mind is tremendous. They shape the reading American's *Weltanschauung*, his ideology, existential patterns, behavioral preferences, morality and eschatology, they instruct on how to live and how to die. They are America's Oxfords and Sorbonnes in Manhattan cubicles with bra-less receptionists, they concoct epistemology for mass-retailing. A crushing majority of Americans has learned the word *ethics* not from Plato, but from *Time* magazine. Each week or month they feature a locust swarm of Sophocleses in double-knit leisure suits to tell Americans about fate and inevitability, Balzacs and Conrads in Gucci loafers to inform them about society and duty, blue-denim Dostoyevskis and Freuds to elaborate on the murkiness of human souls, and cloned mini-Lenins in jogging gear to fast talk on social justice. Today America knows about democracy, misery, choice, pain, love, knowledge, failure, success, genitals, value, humanness, reason, procreation, sorrow, sacrifice and pointlessness from the magazines which are hell-bent on explaining it all.

The realm of the magazine is a large and shallow puddle in which the reflection of a rainbow is perfectly possible. For 30 years it has been the Libcultural rainbow, a glossy source of incoherence, whose colors are not arranged according to the natural pattern but disarrayed by the liberal orientation which fills the puddle. If I had to enumerate what the Liberal Culture targets as its most insidious and implacable enemies in today's America, I would say: normalcy and common sense. It is mainly those elements of humanity which are injured in American magazines on a weekly or monthly basis. Add to this the magazines' cult of transiency and vogue—and we have the gloomy explication of why the ERA is rejected by women, taxpayers must pay money to the bureaucrats who effect their rapid impoverishment, plutocracy is supporting communist preachers, anarchy is called equality, neuroses are hailed as progress. We seem to exist in a gigantic Helzapoppin on a national scale, in which frantic amusement bubbles here and there, though, at second glance, the hilarity suddenly

evaporates. *Women's Wear Daily*, one of the best informed specialty mouthpieces of the Liberal Culture, reports with relish on Mr. Warren Burger's worries on a book about the courts Messrs. Woodward and Bernstein are welding together:

"‘They've been going around the court saying they have all these secret documents, and trying to blackmail people into giving them information,’ said Burger. ‘The problem is, they're never willing to show anyone the documents. Their tactics are a lot like the ones Joe McCarthy used.’ ”

Considering that Mr. Burger is the U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, while Messrs. Woodward and Bernstein are acknowledged highwaymen of American journalism, we can envisage this country drowning in a puddle—as comic as it may sound.

\* \* \*

It has become obvious that in this America, overrun by the Liberal Culture, a new concept of un-American activities is slowly taking shape. The un-American position seems to be that which fails to divorce freedom from responsibility and humanism from good sense. And that which does not see investigative journalism, in its libcultural version, as daredevil bravery and intellectual nonconformity. Its victims, inept government or overregulated business, are doleful underdogs these days; the myth of their formidability is preserved artificially, as is the myth of the righteous purity of the investigators. Once upon a time, un-American activities were those which aimed at the destruction of American values. Misunderstandings and excessive zealotry marred the fight against them: after all, a belief in Marxism was not an un-American activity. But spying for a Marxist state was, and is today. However, the libcultural incoherence has introduced novelties. Today, dismantling America at home and abroad seems to be a virtuous American activity, opposing it un-American. The Libcult insists on sentencing spies according to the importance of the stolen intelligence; if their booty is less significant, let them go free until they export the whole defense system to Cuba or Vietnam. Then we'll punish them by casting at them reproachful glances from the Gulags in Kolyma.

There is a liberal dogma which states that the liberal version of freedom, justice, conscience, progress, pluralism is the only *American* concept of these values, and the liberal press pounds it into minds with a ruthless ferocity. In the liberal press there is a code sentence that says that the ERA is an amendment designed to "outlaw discrimination on the basis of sex." No one ever mentions that there is a giant shelf of congressional

and state laws that outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex, not to mention an entire library of interpretative regulations daily enforced in every nook and cranny of the American actuality.

Is this a matter of intellectual and ethical fairness? Far from it. And this unfairness is at the heart of the liberal concept of American pluralism. America is now more than ever a pluralistic society. But a dangerous myth has been deceptively sustained that the American culture is still open to the diversity of philosophical and ideological propositions, and that they all have an equal chance of being argued for and listened to. In point of fact, the more society, honoring its initial promise of equal human rights and opportunities, opens up to various ethnic groups, their traditions and folkloric paraphernalia, the more pluralism is expelled from the culture. American culture, once the haven of free consciences and religious variety, has become monopolized by one ideological formation—"enlightened" and "progressive" liberalism.

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Liberalism's perennial merit is that it early and forcefully endorsed human rights and privileges, and was ready to pick any fight in their defense. However, at some point, it confused the necessities of moral order grounded in reason, and opted for social order structured on speculative theories.

Professor Irving Howe, a distinguished liberal but by no means a libcultist, who is not shy to call himself a social-democrat, wrote not long ago that the foundation of American liberalism is reason. To my mind, the foundation of American liberalism, at least over the last 30 years of its dizzying career, is the blatant abuse of reason. It fought for a welfare state as the *economic* solution to the ills of a *capitalistic* economy. It propagated Big Government as the defender of freedoms and civil rights—a rather unreasonable supposition. In foreign policy, since World War II, liberalism has informed America that it has no right, and even less moral title, to tell the rest of the world how it should behave; until a few years ago, every staunch liberal insistingly demanded an attitude of reverence toward Russia—toward the same Russia that emerged from the last war as the only imperialistic power, enslaving free nations and enlarging its territory at others' expense. At the same time, the West began to disassemble colonialism under America's pressure. Every objection to unconditional love for Russia has been branded by American liberalism as Cold War tactics and American leaders of all stripes were burdened with the blame. Even now this is taking place as Russia begins to colonize Africa. If this is proof of the liberal obedience to

reason, we may be losing a crucial tool which, since man's dawn, has warranted his very existence.

The *Chicago Tribune*, a chameleon of a newspaper, flannel-grey on its editorial pages and liberal-pinkish in its cultural sections, not long ago ran another of its advertisements for pro-communist books in the form of a review of *The Great Fear*, examined by Mr. Levine in this journal. As in its reports on Mitford and Gornick, the *Chicago Tribune* reviewer stated that the clear-cut anti-communism of the '40s and '50s was sinful, calamitous, repulsive, and, basically, an assault on innocent people and socially valuable organizations. It thus represented an ugly treason of American humanism and pluralism. The review was entitled: "A Painful Record that Illuminates a Dark Age." Why an epoch that brought America social stability, economic prosperity, flourishing of arts and crafts, and all-out progress in social mores, all of which became the entire planet's envy, can be called a "dark age" remains a mystery. Why the galactic American civilization should be characterized solely by its vigorous rejection of communism is another puzzle. The *Chicago Tribune's* review says that "the period was characterized by, above all, a suspension of due process of law," but does not mention the Rosenberg trial, considered even by America's foes a model of judiciary propriety unattainable even by the oldest European democracies. "Was there a viable Communist Party in America during the '30s and '40s? Did it present a legitimate threat to U.S. security?" asks the *Chicago Tribune* reviewer.

Well, I am from Eastern Europe. Whenever I read about the tribulations of Mr. Hiss and his adversaries, who still do not believe what he has been repeating for 30 years, I find them peculiarly irrelevant. If he lied, or passed state secrets, which it seems he did, it is not very nice, and he should have been punished for it. But what matters to me is the fact that, according to quite reliable Polish intelligence sources in London (during six years of war, it saved the allied command a lot of trouble), Mr. Hiss had telephone extension No. 3 within the American delegation at Yalta. No. 1 was Roosevelt, No. 2 was Harry Hopkins. Mr. Hiss instructed them both in how to negotiate with Stalin.

All the Soviet objectives for the post-war global order were attained at Yalta. Entire populations were slaughtered in Gulags. Old nations with flourishing cultures went into slavery. This is why Mr. Alger Hiss, in keeping with my sense of reason and conscience, deserves a life term, if not more.

—Leopold Tyrmand

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## Let Us Listen to the Silence of the Dead

Aleksander I. Solzhenitsyn: *The Gulag Archipelago*, Volume III, Parts V-VII; Harper & Row; New York.

by Leo Raditsa

We have to learn we do not know how to read. This is a good book to start with. It is hard to read. It has to be read at its own pace like Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope Against Hope* or not at all. You cannot lose yourself in it and forget. You keep asking yourself questions when you read it—it asks you questions: What kind of person are you? Are you a person at all? It is a long book and finishes not because the author has said all there is to say, but because he has said enough. It breaks off but what it writes of still continues. According to Sakharov there are at present a million and a half prisoners in the Soviet camps (reported by Solzhenitsyn on French television on March 9, 1976). In fact the problem for Solzhenitsyn in the third volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* is to end the book without inspiring the illusion that because the book ends and he is outside, the camps have disappeared into the past.

Like the other volumes of *Gulag*, this volume (finished in 1968) was written in the period after the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962 when government officials tried to tell Solzhenitsyn his experiences were out of date. "You are confused, or else your own experiences have given you a peculiar way of looking at things," the Minister for the Protection of Public

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Order told him.

In some sense *Gulag* is the child of *Ivan Denisovich*. The publication of that book put Solzhenitsyn in correspondence with individuals from all over Russia, with former *zeks* (prisoners), with jailors, warders, convoy guards and *zeks* still in the camps who pleaded and demanded that he speak out for them too. Because he had started to put the continued existence of the camps out of his mind, these pleas surprised and embarrassed him: "Just as they (the former prisoners) used to think that *everyone was inside*, they now think that no one is inside." For the camps during the time he was outside writing this book, Solzhenitsyn uses these letters from *zeks* and accounts from survivors of the camps in the sixties like Anatoly Marchenko's *My Testimony* (London, 1969). He also gives an important account of the strike in Novocherkassk where Soviet soldiers murdered something like seventy or eighty people on June 2, 1962.

And for us, too, keeping the Soviet camps in our minds is a problem. The world it describes has only just begun to live in our consciousness and even that has taken a long time. Before *The Gulag Archipelago*, there were something like thirty books on the Soviet concentration camps (one was published in English in 1934) but they did not succeed in putting the knowledge of the camps in our breasts where we cannot deny it. And how one wishes to deny this book, desires to destroy it when one reads it, wishes it had never been thought or written or published!

Why has Solzhenitsyn succeeded in making us know in a way we cannot deny? I do not know. Perhaps, because he wrote the book in Russia and for Russians, because he did not write in exile. He never intended it to be published while he lived. But the author lives and the book is published—not in the Soviet Union, though it must circulate there too (of this I have no definite information). It teaches that we are still entangled

in a past we wish away, that Stalin is a part of our world, of us in a way Hitler (whom Solzhenitsyn calls Stalin's disciple) is not. Hitler destroyed in war is in the past—we are conscious of him; he haunts us. But the crimes of Stalin's time are still so much a part of us that we do not know them. They are in our minds even if we do not know them—especially if we do not know them.

In this final volume, Solzhenitsyn speaks both like a *zek* and like himself so his voice is more living and quickening than in the other volumes. In the other volumes he tends to speak either as a *zek* or as a person on the outside but never so deeply for himself as he does in the third volume (and the last chapters of the second). But even in the strength of Solzhenitsyn's voice the work maintains its choral character. Towards the end the dialogue between Solzhenitsyn and himself as a *zek* and the reader deepens—but there are still other voices. There is no problem in this work with the narrator (that is, with his narcissism); he is there, you can hear his voice—but he does not get in the way of other voices which speak for themselves. (Sinyavsky in *A Voice from the Chorus* [New York, 1976] uses the same form, even more sparingly; he has no narrative, only voices.)

It is just these different voices, speaking freely for themselves which allow you to hear the absence of the voices of the millions of dead in the camps who did not speak, because they could not or who spoke and were not heard. Solzhenitsyn's ability to make you hear the silence of the dead, of the unmourned, unburied dead, explains why this book excites fright but not guilt, why it strengthens rather than weakens, why it spurs you to take more responsibility for your life rather than to blame others for it. Surviving *zeks*—and by that he means *zeks* who survived without doing others in—do not pity themselves. This book teaches you something of that kind of self-respect.

I feel like an intruder when I read this book. This has to do with its “secrecy,” with the fact that Solzhenitsyn wrote it without intending to publish it. It is also because in some important sense it is written not for the whole world, but for Russians and the other nationalities subjected to the Soviet regime. When he wrote this work, Solzhenitsyn did not think of audiences living in freedom beyond Soviet frontiers. In this his work contrasts with Nadezhda Mandelstam’s *Hope Against Hope* and perhaps also with Andre Amalrik’s *Involuntary Voyage to Siberia*. Mandelstam somehow writes for the whole world. As a result when you read her you do not doubt that her story is part of Western history, not merely of Soviet history—and the moral sense is deeper. It is deeper because she knows what goes on within the Soviet Union is a part of Western history. It might be, in fact, merely “an internal affair” as the Soviet regime asserts if there were agreed upon frontiers in Europe and a peace treaty. But the point about history in the twentieth century is that it neither respects frontier, nor the distinction between foreign and domestic affairs: if it would, the KGB would do abroad exactly what it does at home.

But there is another, perhaps deeper reason, for the sense of intrusion I experienced in reading *Gulag*. Solzhenitsyn really doubts whether anybody who has not been in the camps can understand. In part he doubts anybody can understand, because he himself did not understand until he was arrested at the front in Prussia in February 1945 and sent to the camps. Only then did he discover the other Russia. As a youth in the late thirties, he had seen through the trials of 1937 and 1938 (he was interested in politics). But he had not understood their relation to everything else going on before his eyes, to the students and teachers disappearing from the university. He saw them go but he did not wonder where they went; he had continued dancing and having loving affairs, as if nothing had happened. He says of himself and his wife in 1941: “We had

just lived through the thirties—and we might as well not have been alive in that decade at all.” “And young men are so eager to believe that all is well.”

This doubt that you can know anything before it hits you runs through the whole work, but in the last volume it grows overwhelming and turns into a question, a terrible question: did the *zeks* not resist enough, were they in some sense complicit with their tormentors? Reviews of *Ivan Denisovich* in the Soviet press which in reckless arrogance argued Denisovich’s docility spurred Solzhenitsyn to ask this question of himself and his reader.

Were the *zeks* submissive? Yes, generally. Solzhenitsyn speaks in baffled admiration and with something like envy of those rare individuals in the camps who were naturally independent, who breathed an inner confidence and never suffered any abuse. But why was there almost no protest or defiance? Because in contrast to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century under the Tsars, in Soviet Russia there is no longer any public opinion. “The prolonged absence of any free exchange of information within a country opens up a gulf of incomprehension between whole groups of the population, between millions and millions. We simply *cease to be a single people*, for we speak, indeed, different languages.”

Solzhenitsyn rightly considers his work and action and the work and action of the other “dissidents” the rebirth of public opinion in Russia. And new groups and new individuals keep springing up and works keep appearing in self-publication—even though in the free West some observers somehow expect things to stop.

In the fifties, before the death of Stalin, however, something happened in the camps. Those who were in the camps for no special reason (he calls them political) but in the second volume he has made it clear that they were not political prisoners in any “legal” sense but simply prisoners who had not committed crimes) were separated from the thieves and murderers and put into special

camps. No longer kept apart from each other by criminals who robbed them they began to experience something like community. They began to realize that they were not merely a collection of individuals and became in some sense a whole. They realized that there were things more important than survival if the price was the life of another. This awareness inspired defiance—not violence.

There was a strike in which prisoners refused to go to work and refused to take food from the camp administration (something he later came to consider a mistake). Even prisoners who were near death, “goners,” refused food. The people in charge were baffled.

For the first time they treated the prisoners with some regard and asked them politely to return to work. The prisoners continued to strike. They did not ask to be released because they were innocent—but they asked for better treatment, for no bars on the windows, for a review of cases. In this defiance even though they were starving even more than usual there was energy and even a kind of joy. They were no longer ashamed because they knew they would no longer undergo any humiliation to survive. They also fashioned a kind of government. (More than the other two this volume meditates on what distinguishes society from a crowd. More than once it reminded me of Hobbes, except that Solzhenitsyn is less afraid than Hobbes—and he does not write of human beings but of Russians and not of society but of prison camps in a country which is in the state of nature but denies it—something Hobbes did not dream of in his philosophy.) Their leaders made it clear to the stool pigeons that they would kill them if they continued to inform on them. Some innocent men were killed (and Solzhenitsyn does not take any of the killing lightly) but their readiness to rid themselves of the prisoners who betrayed them made it possible for them to trust each other, to experience something like community for the first time. But they did not know what to ask for (beyond their few demands.) That is, they did not ask for freedom. When the people

in charge appeared to yield to their demands, they were crushed with gratitude. They grew gullible. When commissions came from the outside to ask them where they would like to go upon their release, they were astonished but they trusted. They believed things had actually changed. When they grew off their guard, the "authorities" turned on them and took their leaders away to punishment cells or to death and brought back the informers and the thieves and the murderers. (Diplomats should study these negotiations.) Although the defiance failed, it changed the camp permanently:

"On the surface, we were prisoners living in a camp just as before, but in reality we had become free—free because for the very first time in our lives, we had started saying openly and aloud all that we thought! No one who has not experienced this transition can imagine what it is like!"

The defiance drew the distinction between a community and a mob which exists in terror of itself. It also made it clear that such a community could not live without courage and that the readiness to risk one's life did not guarantee survival—but that without courage one could not survive to live a life worth living. It also taught that a courageous death has its own honor. All this seems like classical patriotism rediscovered in a concentration camp, but it is not, for the courage to stand alone of one's own choice contrasts with the soldier's courage. In the camps Solzhenitsyn saw to his surprise that officers and soldiers who had withstood the terrors of battle were often as servile as the other prisoners:

"Oh, how difficult it is, how difficult it is, to become a human being! Even if you have survived the front and bombing and been blown up by land mines, that's still only the very beginning of heroism. That is still not the whole thing."

What is innocence—that is the subject of this volume. This word innocence is very precious to Solzhenitsyn. He uses it rarely as if he would not use it up. He leaves it to the reader to pronounce. And we pronounce it hesitatingly. How hard it is to say it! The prisoners themselves, when they defied the camp "authorities," did not dare say it: "In the foul fog of terror that hung thickly over the land, the cases brought against most of us, and the sentences passed seemed to our judges fully justified—and they had almost made us believe it ourselves."

In the Tsarist camps there were one or two men who were innocent—in the Soviet camps there were millions. Solzhenitsyn's story is not of the guilty who repented in prison but of some of the innocent who came to experience their innocence in the camps and to stand alone in their own defense and the defense of their peers, the other innocents: "And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of Good." This meant also experiencing the evil, the destructiveness within them.

In free countries, or in Tsarist Russia, the establishment of innocence depended on the perception of others, on public opinion, on judges and juries, not on the accused's experience of his innocence—and his guilt. But in the Soviet Union, where there is no public opinion only organized opinion, and where there is no law (independent of political expediency), every accused and condemned individual is driven to accuse himself

and to be judge in his own case. As a result these individuals face only the most unsparing judges, themselves. For everybody is severest on himself, most of all those who imagine they are not.

No regime which commits the murder reported in this book can survive unless it can bring the governments of the rest of the world, especially the free world, to assert things that they know are not true: "Ours is the only country in the world to pamper perjurers."

But our governments do not appear to have realized that something has started in the Soviet Union which cannot be stopped even if the West caves in and thereby prolongs the force of the Soviet regime. They think and talk as if the Soviet regime will last forever. Like most of those who think otherwise, Solzhenitsyn knows the changes in Russia are going to have to come slowly from the Russians themselves. That is why he criticizes the attack on Stalin and the cult of personality as evasive: it feeds the illusion that only "Whiskers" is responsible for the murder:

"But let us admit: if under Stalin this whole scheme of things did not come into being on its own—and if, instead, he himself worked it out all for us point by point—he really was a genius!"

Just this assumption of their own responsibilities by Russians makes the responsibilities of the West more clear, because not limitless: to take actions in foreign policy that will strengthen the brave individuals in Russia who are fighting for respect for law and constitutional liberties—and not to mince words. □

*"As to this country's relations with the Communist states, we fear that Mr. Solzhenitsyn does the world no favor by calling up a holy war. The weapons are far too formidable, the stakes in human life far too high. But there is something else as well. Much as we have been instructed and inspired by Mr. Solzhenitsyn, his willingness to set aside all other values in the crusade against Communism bespeaks an obsession that we are happy to forego in this nation's leaders. A certain amount of self-doubt is a valuable attribute for people who have charge of nuclear weapons."*

—From an editorial on Solzhenitsyn's Commencement Address at Harvard University  
*The New York Times*, June 13, 1978

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# Fellow Traveling to Paradise

Christopher Hill: *Milton and the English Revolution*; Viking; New York.

by Albert C. Labriola

Long admired as one of the foremost scholars of the causes and consequences of the English Revolution, Christopher Hill has recently been attacked by other historians, notably J.H. Hexter, for alleged distortions of evidence, biased opinions and views, and narrow-minded interpretations of the events and personages of the period about which he writes, seventeenth-century England. In their exchanges in the *Times Literary Supplement* Hexter and Hill are at times vitriolic. About the time of these exchanges, Hill also published in *T.L.S.* a preview-essay of his long-planned book on Milton. Coupled with his status as honored scholar in 1975 of the Milton Society of America and his visit to the United States in 1976 to teach a Folger Institute seminar in Milton and the English Revolution, the *T.L.S.* controversy aroused the expectations of historians and Miltonists on both sides of the Atlantic.

If Hill's past views on the English Revolution are controversial then his interpretation of the prose and poetry of the foremost intellectual of the period, John Milton, will evoke some protest. Consistent with his past theories, most forcefully stated in *The World Turned Upside Down*, Hill argues that in the 1640's England was in a state of radical ferment, while numerous religious sects and political groups resisted and challenged the intolerance and repression of Laudianism and the sovereignty of the British monarchy. Called the popular heretical culture or political underground, these radical groups, including

Baptists, Levellers, Diggers, Seekers, Behmenists, Socinians, Ranters, Muggletonians, and Early Quakers, united to form a virtual splinter coalition that provided impetus for the overthrow of Anglicanism and the British monarchy.

In this milieu of ferment and revolution, which he more than any other historian has sought to research and explain, Hill situates Milton, who allegedly conducted a continuous dialogue with the radicals, from whom he derived some of his theological, political, and social ideas, with whom he sometimes differed, and whom at times he tried to unite. From Hill's perspective Milton and the radical groups with whom he is connected may be placed in a tradition of protest that dates back to the Middle Ages, traceable to the Lollards and to Wyclif, Huss, and Zwingli. Because of censorship before the early 1640's, some of the seventeenth-century radical groups were unable to disseminate their views in writing or to communicate them in public. To circumvent the repressive measures of censorship, an intolerant government, and state religion, the radicals resorted to secret meetings in ale-houses and taverns. This poses some difficulty, insurmountable in my judgment, in explaining how Milton came to interact with the radicals. Hill surmises that Milton may have participated in ale-house cabals, but there is little evidence to controvert the prevalent view that Milton dissociated himself from common men and that he actively avoided the uneducated.

Despite the length of Hill's book, more than 500 pages, and its seeming wealth of documentation, the essential thesis—that Milton conducted a continuous dialogue with the radicals—remains unsubstantiated. Corollaries of this central thesis are likewise unproved, so that the entire argument is conjectural at best. To define the curve of Milton's political career, Hill constructs a tendentious intellectual biog-

raphy. Much of the material is already well-known. Beginning with the grammar-school days at St. Paul's, Hill shows Milton's admiration for so-called radicals, like Alexander Gill, Thomas Young, and Charles Diodati, his closest boyhood companion. At Cambridge Milton's brashness is also evident in his conduct and in his academic exercises. His decision not to enter the ministry,

"Mr. Hill is the master historian of his chosen field."

—*American Historical Review*

his years of private study at Hammer-smith and Horton, the anti-clericalism of *Lycidas* all combine to suggest a portrait of a young radical whose European journey, association with the liberal Florentine *cognoscenti*, especially of the *Svogliati*, and whose visits with such rebellious and revolutionary thinkers as Jean Diodati and Galileo, whom he greatly admired, further delineate this portrait. Such background is provided to make Milton's alleged interaction with the extremely radical splinter groups of the 1640's all the more plausible. This view, however, does not distinguish between the intellectual revolutionaries with whom he interacted, to whom he often refers, and with whom he sought to establish affinity, and the undisciplined and irresponsible radical groups whose fragmentation, proliferation, and disunity eliminated the possibility of a stable government.

If, in fact, Milton's independency and his ideas about society, politics, and religion were placed in a "great tradition," one that can be inferred from his known reading, his extensive notes and countless allusions in his works, that tradition would begin with Graeco-Roman antiquity, extend into the early history of the Christian faith, and continue through the writings of the Church Fathers and later commentators. The primacy of the natural law was amply supported by numerous Church Fathers, and the right

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of the people to overthrow an unjust monarch is defended by St. Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, the intolerance and repression that Milton saw and experienced in the state and in its officially sanctioned religion were manifestations in his culture and era of the same enemies against liberty and conscience that had been present earlier, elsewhere, and in other guises. The intellectual libertarians who fought, sacrificed, and recounted their struggles, ranging from Cicero to Paolo Sarpi, were the predecessors whose traits of character, qualities of sagacity and erudition, sense of justice, and intense personal commitment were re-embodyed in Milton. Interestingly, Hill strives to dissociate Milton from this very tradition, which for him is too "bookish." As if thinking were antithetical to action, he seems to imply that true reform does not result from intellectual endeavor, philosophical speculation, and a profound sense of the past.

If his reading of Milton's prose tracts is biased, then Hill's understanding of the great poems is also tendentious. In *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, and *Paradise Regained*, Milton's intellectual biography is somehow completed, for in these poems Hill perceives Milton's commentary on the failure of the English Revolution. In explaining these poems, which he chooses not to consider aesthetically, Hill emphasizes their so-called political action. In doing so, however, the characters come to represent whomever and whatever Hill chooses. Satan, for instance, is variously a royalist, a Ranter, a Cromwellian general, and even Milton. From one perspective, then, Satan is a general whose personal ambition taints his initial intention of reform. Having been on the losing side, Milton sought to understand why God sanctioned a revolution in England, a revolution that failed. Ultimately Milton concludes, in Hill's interpretation of the great poems, that he and the other revolutionaries were not adequately transformed and purified to complete their divinely ordained mission. However noble at first, their principles became corrupted, and the endeavor failed. In

Samson's case virtually the same point is made, for he too began his task of liberating the chosen people only to become a captive of the Philistines. At the end of his life, however, he learns that pride and ambition had tainted him, but that the hope of continuing the mission is ever-possible as Providence's grand design progressively unfolds. Accordingly, Samson's success at the end of Milton's poem is designed to impart hope to the revolutionaries, for whom the Restoration should represent a setback, not a final defeat.

In the dialectic of history that Hill perceives, a dialectic that he also sees recounted in Adam's dream-vision in Books XI and XII of *Paradise Lost*, the lesson iterated is the one that Samson underwent and that Milton and the revolutionaries experienced. The continuous process of struggle, ascendancy, downfall, and more struggle is integral to the Marxist view of history. Concomitantly,

the revolutionaries must develop worthiness, self-sacrifice and integrity of mind and character necessary to implement and consummate the noble tasks they have undertaken. Indeed, in Hill's conception the Christ of *Paradise Regained* is the perfect man after whom the revolutionaries should model themselves. To fail is to learn, for the revelation of weaknesses that accompanies downfall prepares one for the next encounter.

Short of synthesizing the book in great detail, it is not possible to suggest how recklessly it interprets Milton's poetry, how inattentive it is at times to recent scholarship, especially that on the Incarnation and Milton's kenotic Christology, and how tenaciously it proceeds to claim Milton as an enthusiastic advocate of democracy, if not a quasi-Marxist revolutionary. Not since *Milton's God*, which Hill singles out for special praise, have Milton and his poetry been subjected to such distortion. □

### About the Chronicles of Culture

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— *The New American Review*  
April/May 1978

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— David Holbrook  
*The (London) Times*  
May 30, 1978

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# America Sweat-Drenched in Fear

David Caute: *The Great Fear*; Simon and Schuster; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

David Caute, a well-known British intellectual historian, has produced a near-encyclopedic account of the issue of domestic anti-Communism in America during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. But *The Great Fear* is not just another liberal diatribe against Senator Joe McCarthy. It is a relentless distortion of the history of an era, and itself is an exercise in inverted McCarthyism. Routine government security measures, legal harassment of the Communist Party, McCarthy's smear campaign, the bizarre practice of "black-listing" in the entertainment industry, newspaper sensationalism, and the blusterings of ineffectual cranks, are all lumped together and condemned equally with little sense of justice or proportion. If a dog barked at a Communist mailman, you'll find the incident mentioned and deplored in this volume.

The very title of the book indicates Caute's attempt to force the events he describes into a false comparative framework. The original "Great Fear" was the hysterical belief of the French peasants in 1789 that the aristocracy was importing brigands to suppress them. In his introduction Caute blandly remarks that "the great fear, like the threat of upheaval and expropriation that inspires it, has been a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the bourgeoisie since the French Revolution." He claims that he is merely recording a recent instance of this phenomenon; earlier examples being the anti-Jacobinism of the 1790's and the Red Scare of 1919.

However, there is little reason to think that the ruckus over Communism that began in the late 1940's was inspired by a perception of revolutionary danger.

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Save perhaps for a few lunatics, no one believed that such a threat existed. The charge against the American Communist Party was that it was what used to be called a "fifth column," an arm of a dangerous external enemy, the Soviet Union. The real historical analogy to be made is with a series of events much closer in time to those which Caute discusses; namely, the reaction in the western democracies during World War II to the greatly exaggerated accounts of the German "fifth column" in western Europe in 1940. That reaction led to the suspension of *habeas corpus* in Britain and the internment of one hundred thousand completely innocent Japanese-Americans. These things were far more serious infringements of civil liberties than anything cited by Caute. But perhaps noting a valid analogy would have put a spoke in Caute's anti-anti-Communist sermonizing.

The central theme of *The Great Fear* is a development of an argument already advanced by Richard Freeland and Athan Theoharis. They claimed that it was the Truman administration's general policy of opposition to Communism, and particularly its internal loyalty and security program, that was to blame for an eruption of anti-communist hysteria in the early 1950's. Caute takes this a step further; in his perverse interpretation, McCarthyism was a good thing, the real evil was the government's security program, the true villains neither the communists nor the McCarthyites, but the "small-town hicks," Harry Truman and the "Cold War liberals." (In case the reader is unfamiliar with leftist code-phrases, "Cold War liberals" were those liberals who entertained sufficient doubts about Stalin's goodwill to favor defensive measures against him.) It is clear throughout the book that Caute's sympathies are less with innocent people smeared as communists than with the genuine communists who suffered from government harassment.

Caute happily agrees that Joe McCarthy was a liar and a slanderer, but his "role was historically healthy because he dramatized intolerance, lent it crude, villainous features, personalized it, stole it away from the low-profiled bureaucrats." Those who have read McCarthy's remarks about, for example, General Marshall and Dean Acheson, will be able

*"The Great Fear makes its point that the McCarthy era . . . befouled and corrupted the air breathed by each and every one of us. And one comes away persuaded that no degree of international Communist menace could have justified the corrosion of bedrock democratic principles that the hysteria of the period obviously produced."*  
—New York Times

to restrain their admiration for his "role." We are told elsewhere that he pumped the problem "into a monstrously inflamed boil that sooner or later, had to be lanced," though on the evidence that Caute himself presents, it was actually the Warren Court that changed matters.

Of course, this argument can be sustained only by largely ignoring the historical background. To most observers it might seem perfectly natural to exclude communists from government jobs when the United States was in a life-or-death struggle with the Soviet Union, and obvious that any failure to even attempt to do so would have played straight into the hands of demagogues like McCarthy. Caute's discussion of the Cold War is rather foggy and is expressed in a vocabulary largely composed of sneering code-words and phrases. He never really bothers to explain just why it was wrong to screen government employees. In general he displays a somewhat simple-minded, extremist attitude towards civil liberties issues, claiming that under the Smith Act "even thoughts could cost a man his liberty." Any attempt to force candidates for public office "to repudiate specific doctrines or organizations could be construed only as an undemocratic

impairment of the people's freedom to elect the representatives of their choice." Presumably Caute would burn with indignation if he contemplated the monstrous restriction on the freedom of the West Germans, who are not permitted to vote for Nazi candidates.

Caute generally tries to give the impression that there was no genuine problem to be resolved. The extensive communist penetration of the wartime American intelligence agency, the OSS, a perfect example of what the American government wished to avoid, is only mentioned briefly in a footnote in the back of the book. At one point Caute argues that the British handled things better, by essentially doing nothing. It is true that the British did not suffer from a major controversy over internal security. Since they had Harold Philby instead, this is not a very impressive argument.

Nor is Caute at all convincing in his claim that the government's security measures and the Smith Act prosecution of the communist leaders, in themselves, produced a nation "sweat-drenched in fear." Whether this perspiration problem really existed is more than questionable. If, as Caute rightly emphasizes, the American Communist Party was a minor force, peripheral to the main concerns of American life, and anti-communist measures were favored by an immense majority of the American people, it is hard to see how such a situation could result. In fact, public opinion polls taken at the height of McCarthy's popularity in 1953-1954 suggest that most people were never worried either about communist infiltration or threats to civil liberties. To be sure, a climate of anxiety did develop within the Federal government but this was caused by abuses of the security system under McCarthy's impact, not by the system itself.

In trying to back up his arguments, Caute is not always accurate, and despite the broad coverage of his book he sometimes skims over important issues. Caute is noncommittal about whether Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs were guilty—he would obviously prefer to believe that

they weren't, and slides over the Harry Dexter White case. An official of the American Military government in Germany who fled to Czechoslovakia on being exposed as a communist becomes just one of a number of persons "with liberal or radical backgrounds" victimized by postwar reaction. Caute is particularly free in misrepresenting his *bête noire*, those "Cold War liberals." He claims, quite falsely, that they only began to oppose McCarthy at the time of the Voice of America "investigation" in 1953. The Communist Control Act proposed by Hubert Humphrey is treated as a genuine assault on civil liberties, though it was recognized at the time as a trick to steal the thunder of the Republicans, which, since it was openly unconstitutional, would be voided by the courts.

On the other hand Caute is quite happy to repeat modern liberal myths, such as the fable of the brilliant China Service diplomats penalized for their farsightedness. A review of the reports of John Stewart Service, for example, makes it difficult to sustain this thesis. In fact it is easy to see why suspicion fell upon those American diplomats who recognized and harped on the faults of the nationalist regime, but totally failed to perceive the totalitarian nature of the Chinese communist movement.

Caute does provide fairly accurate accounts of some abuses that developed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The boneheaded conduct of the State Department and the immigration authorities are discussed at some length. International scientific meetings were gravely impeded, aged and entirely harmless communists were deported to their forgotten homelands, and Caute deals with these things with justified asperity. (A particularly absurd example of passport restrictions forced Paul Robeson to give a concert in Canada by singing across the American-Canadian frontier through a loudspeaker system.) Other better-known absurdities receive treatment; the familiar story of the indignities inflicted on scientists such as Edward U. Condon and J. Robert Oppenheimer is retold well, though the force of Caute's observations

is weakened by his refusal to distinguish between the existence of the security system and its abuse. The antics of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the blacklists justly receive the back of Caute's hand. There is even an occasional flash of real insight, as when Caute observes that on the problem of communism "the Republican isolationists talked tough but shrank from the fight."

It is, however, hard to feel the indignation Caute expects of his readers, because any sensible observations are lost in a sea of moral confusion. The sufferings of the communist leaders jailed under the Smith Act receive lachrymose treatment, while Caute rails against American's anti-communist intellectuals for allegedly neglecting their "critical function," and indicts them for failing to see that the United States must be "restrained" as well as the Soviet Union. Not the communist, but the FBI and ex-Communist witnesses are the villains of the era for Caute, and he describes them as a convict would a stool-pigeon. While rigidly skeptical of the FBI, Caute treats the testimony of communists far more leniently. In fact, they can even read minds; in one case Caute accepts the explanation offered by an unrepentant Hollywood communist for the change of heart experienced by one of the Hollywood Ten.

There is little doubt that the issue of internal security and American Communism attracted a disproportionate amount of attention in the forties and fifties. A secondary, even tertiary aspect of the world struggle was elevated to an importance it just did not deserve. A critical treatment of the events Caute examines is certainly in order, but anyone interested in a serious interpretation of the problem would be well-advised to consult some other work, notably Earl Latham's excellent *The Communist Controversy in Washington*. The McCarthyites often acted as though they retained but a tenuous lifeline to reality; David Caute often writes as though he has severed his. □

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# Memoirs of a Mistress-Martyr

Olga Ivinskaya: *A Captive of Time: My Years with Pasternak*; Doubleday & Co., Inc.; Garden City, New York.

by Lev Navrozov

"My beloved, my shame, my scourge . . ."  
—Alexander Blok: *Black Blood*

Boris Pasternak burst forth as the 20th-Century Mozart of poetry when the Golden Age of Russian poetry was at its zenith, in 1912, five years before the origin of the so-called Soviet regime. But since the Western mass-cultural perception of Russia never bothered to notice such microdetails as five years in Pasternak's life, Soviet propaganda could well make out that Pasternak was an offspring of the Soviet regime who personified the "new Renaissance of the new revolutionary era in the history of mankind." The Soviet regime appropriated the names of Pasternak and other geniuses who had sprouted and come to blossom in "tsarist" Russia, and allowed them, in exchange, to live more or less unmolested until the mid-'30s. As a result, the afterglow of the Golden Age of "tsarist" Russia, and hence the afterglow of the genius of Boris Pasternak, lingered up to the mid-'30s.

By the '50s all of the geniuses who were allowed to survive by the Soviet regime had deteriorated, but the regression of Pasternak was especially harrowing. He had never been a technician of versification—he had been a genius. So when he tried in the '50s to write "poetry just like others did," what he produced was sometimes below the average of Soviet technicians of versification—efficient poetasters. Tragically, he also tried to "correct" (mutilate) his poetry of 1912

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to 1934.

Describing the destiny of Russian culture, Western mass culture usually concentrates on the Soviet regime's physical persecution. It does not notice the disintegration of the survivors of the Golden Age of Russian culture—the barbarization of even those of its geniuses as Pasternak, for how can one barbarous mass culture notice the barbarity of another barbarous mass culture?

No, in the English text of Olga Ivinskaya's book *A Captive of Time*, replete with quotations of poetry, no one could detect the barbarization of Russian culture as exemplified by Pasternak. A lack of conscientiousness makes the English translations of both Pasternak's verse of genius and of Pasternak's pathetic verse of the '50s, and of someone else's doggerel meant to be doggerel, all sound like doggerel. Indeed, Pasternak became a "celebrity" in the West just as Mrs. Alliluyeva (daughter of Stalin) or Yevtushenko or the Watergate men did—through newspaper sensationalism. He passed his novel *Doctor Zhivago* for publication abroad, in Italy, and though the resulting hue and cry of the Soviet regime could have easily killed him (he contemplated their joint suicide, according to Olga Ivinskaya) it certainly provided good copy for a West-wide sensation. Needless to say, Pasternak's novel was a painful anti-climax compared to his creativity in 1912 to 1934, but in Western mass culture it only matters how many times one's name is repeated in the newspapers, not why it is repeated.

Olga Ivinskaya and Pasternak met in 1946. If the period from 1918 to 1934 was the afterglow of the Golden Age of Russian culture, the '40s and the '50s were the afterglow of the afterglow. It was the afterlife of Russian culture, the nether world, the time of the dead. She became his beloved, to use the only word proper in this context, despite the unbearable external tawdriness of the 14-year romance. However, Pasternak never

tried to divorce his legal wife, Zinaida Nikolayevna. Olga Ivinskaya explains this by Pasternak's revulsion to gaining his happiness at the expense of hurting Zinaida Nikolayevna, his desire to let life take its own natural, spontaneous, creative course, and those splendid domestic conditions for work that she made for him.

I will add another reason: my mother, who knew the lady well under the trying conditions of wartime (while I was only an adolescent), always assured me that Zinaida Nikolayevna was the nearest embodiment of an angel possible on this sad earth.

Be this as it may, Olga Ivinskaya was a good target for the Soviet secret police to keep Pasternak in check. For Pasternak continued to behave with the aristocratic spontaneity of a Russian child-genius. He was never arrested; since the more refined Russian intelligentsia, now dispersed into tiny private microworlds, worshiped him, the Soviet ruling caste had a ridiculously exaggerated notion of his fame and influence in the West, an illusion which was reinforced by the memory of an unprecedented standing ovation in his honor at the International Congress in Defense of Culture in Paris in 1935. On the other hand, the arrest of Ivinskaya was a safe proposition as far as the Western public opinion was concerned. There could be a strong campaign abroad against the arrest of Pasternak's wife. But a strong campaign against the arrest of Pasternak's mistress? The very word is awkward, is it not? While the word "beloved" has been relegated to a sophomore's papers on Dante.

She was released in four years, in 1953, but after Pasternak's death in 1960 she was imprisoned for four years again—and again quite safely with respect to the public opinion abroad: for the same reason.

Her status of "mistress" also hit her when Soviet propaganda thundered, on Pasternak's publication abroad of *Doctor Zhivago*, that the traitor Pasternak could

leave the country if he wished. Olga Ivinskaya says: "The question whether to go or not never seriously arose," for Pasternak "deeply loved the country." She repeats beautiful Soviet clichés. Ernest Hemingway adds his sickening mite to the pious stereotype: "I know how deeply, with all his heart, he [Pasternak] is attached to Russia. For a genius such as Pasternak, separation from his country would be a tragedy."

Many Americans are as sure that the Russian writers cannot part with their Russia for emotional reasons, as many Russians are sure that American movie actresses have their teeth made out of pearls. Actually, considering the temper of the late '50s, the Soviet rulers would have never allowed Olga Ivinskaya and her children by another marriage to go abroad with Pasternak. What article of the United Nations charter says that the mistresses of great poets should be allowed to join them abroad? Pasternak *had* to give up the Nobel Prize and to write those two "letters of renunciation," one to Khrushchev and the other to *Pravda*, if he didn't want to lose Ivinskaya forever. It should be remembered that until the early '60s it was not clear whether the rulers had become more lenient than Stalin was, or the period of 1954 to 1959 was a five-year respite before a new wave of reprisals.

The rationale for the second arrest of Ivinskaya after Pasternak's death was as clear as it was for her first arrest. After Pasternak's death, he could well be regarded again by Soviet propaganda as "our great Soviet poet." There was only one skeleton in this shining cupboard: the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* abroad. Pasternak's poetry was *not* "anti-Soviet," for there is nothing "Soviet" or "anti-Soviet" about the summers or rains Pasternak loved to set to the Mozartian music of his verse. Summers come in the Temperate Zone of the Earth under all regimes, and rains fall as they did before Russia came into existence. But the novel was at variance with Soviet propaganda's image of Lenin's coup in the autumn of 1917. After Pasternak's death it was convenient to shift the novel

onto the "mistress." Some secret police investigators even declared that *she* had written the novel. Beyond caviar, she was the prototype for Lara, one of the two leading characters of the novel. Surely this was a crime per se, even if not properly codified.

The Russians of my milieu will read Ivinskaya's book like a gold digger works a promising creek. There is little they do not know. But they will fervently sift the text for tiny grains of gold to stow away in their memory.

Yet they will also remember something else. Olga Ivinskaya is a heroine in her own right, the Héloïse of the epoch of totalitarian regimes. Even if her be-

loved had not been the 20th century Mozart of poetry. Even though her book lapses now and then into those platitudes which are taken for revelations in Soviet and Western mass culture. Even though her book is full (at least at the beginning) of that literary-high-society chitchat which is as uninteresting and incomprehensible to anyone outside downtown Moscow as its New York analogue to anyone living beyond Mineola. With all its even-ifs and even-thoughts, the story of Pasternak's Muse, of feminine devotion, saintliness and endurance, will stay, if only in Russian memories, after the mounts of mass culture east or west have reduced to their primary fibrous substance without a trace of human meaning in a single living neuron. □

## The Vengeance of Civil Servants and Other Stories

H.R. Haldeman (with Joseph DiMona): *The Ends of Power*; Times Books; New York.

by Paul Gottfried

It is now possible to add yet another volume to those bulky recollections being produced by Richard Nixon's former aides. In view of the unctuous memoirs already published by John Dean and Chuck Colson, I prepared myself for the worst in sitting down to H.R. Haldeman's account of his life in the White House. Unfortunately, Haldeman does paint a self-serving picture of his virtues. When Nixon, for example, is shown feuding with Katherine Graham, shrewish editor of *The Washington Post*, it is our author who supposedly mediated between them. And when Nixon and his more impetuous staff members plot revenge against their enemies, Haldeman again "sounds a cautionary note." Although his relationship to Henry Kissinger was notoriously bitter, Haldeman forgets this bitterness

in retrospect. Instead he depicts himself as the mature mentor, who counselled the hot-blooded Kissinger before that figure came to control American foreign policy.

These observations aside, however, *The Ends of Power* is a book to be recommended to conscientious historians. For in spite of the stylistic and other flaws, the work does try to make sense out of the Watergate affair. And it may also teach us more about Nixon's presidency than does any other book published to date. Haldeman considers the Nixon years a period of growing tension between a desperately insecure, though elected, national leader and a massive enemy force composed of federal officials, intelligence agents, journalists and educators. The tension described would result in having undercover agents being deployed by Nixon against his political enemies. It would also lead to those violent assaults upon Nixon's character and reputation launched by the news media and by assorted critics in government.

The most controversial statements in Haldeman's book concern the role assigned to the C.I.A. in discrediting

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Nixon. According to this account, Richard Helms and other leaders of the intelligence service, had actually planned the failure of the Plumbers' operations. Supposedly Howard Hunt, James McCord, and several of their Cuban accomplices were taking orders from the CIA at the very time they were committing the Watergate break-in. Haldeman contrasts the conspicuous record of botched operations left by the Plumbers from their organization in 1971 down through the Watergate fiasco, with the past efficiency of the individual participants as undercover agents. He insists that the CIA had a serious interest in undermining Nixon's prestige. For what its administrators most feared was having their agency degraded to what the F.B.I. had already become after Hoover's death, an instrument of presidential power.

Haldeman focuses on the spoiled relations between Nixon and the CIA, and dwells on the continuing links between the individual Plumbers and the CIA leaders long after the former had supposedly resigned from the intelligence community. Nonetheless, the evidence marshaled does not suffice to prove Haldeman's most far-reaching assertions. For, while it is possible to concede a great deal of animus between the White House and Richard Helms, Haldeman does not convincingly show that the Plumbers failed in their work for obeying the latter, not the former. Nor does he ever prove that CIA administrators did in fact send orders to the Plumbers.

The most perceptive part of his work, however, is to be found in his presentation of Nixon's political encirclement. The impression here conveyed is that Nixon never fully understood the true power of his enemies, and that, once having challenged them on grounds of personal vanity, was then forced to fight without being able to gain for himself the appearance of battling for principle.

During recent years, political analysts, such as Kevin Phillips and Irving Kristol, have proclaimed the accession to power of a new ruling class in America. Encompassing the producers of services rather

than commodities and exercising control over a vast empire of printed and televised words, this new class is now engaged in a struggle against capitalism as the self-styled champions of greater social equality. In my opinion, most studies of this new class have focused far too much on its cultural aspect. For example, Kristol has stressed the snobbish contempt of the academic and literary community, and of its numerous supporters, for the prosaic world of businessmen and industrialists. Phillips has been interested in the difference of values between the media, educators, and publicists on the one side, and the commercial-productive sector of society on the other.

Such pictures of purely cultural confrontation do scant justice to what they attempt to describe. The new class may be aesthetically and morally significant, but what makes it a class, as James Burnham has recently argued, is the shared socio-economic interest of its members. The radical egalitarian stances characteristic of public functionaries and educators are, among other things, the ideological props of an ascending social class dependent upon ever greater exactions of tax money. The struggle of this class against the private sector, and simultaneously against capitalism, should be seen, at least in part, as the attempt of a rising power elite to expand its economic and political base. To be sure, this work is something which must be pursued with the appropriate cultural symbols. So publicly financed reformers denounce philistine homeowners and ridicule Rotarian Babbitts, while being applauded by the self-hating sons of successful immigrant craftsmen and by Harvard-educated journalists. And yet, the demands of Kristol's new class for socialism and social engineering, for enforced ends to sexism and racism, are a call for still greater power to the public sector, the ultimate beneficiaries of the new politics, and perhaps nowhere else are these beneficiaries of radical chic as acclimated to privilege as in the civil service in Washington.

Describing this officialdom, Haldeman makes the observation: "Nixon could

rave and rant. Civil servants, almost all liberal Democrats, would thumb their noses at him." Elsewhere he notes that "Republican cabinet officers, installed at the heads of departments, soon find that they rule nothing. The real decisions are made below by people who cannot be fired under Civil Service rules and who will be there long after the Republican Cabinet officers depart. As far as civil servants are concerned, every Republican administration is a transient phenomenon of no lasting importance." Haldeman was especially struck by Nixon's inability to deal from a position of power with the IRS. He cites the refusal of IRS officials to audit the taxes of Nixon's political opponents, while doing unsolicited audits on the President's backers. He also notes the frequency with which the embarrassing results of these audits were then leaked to anti-administration newspapers.

Bureaucratic insubordination also abounded in the Justice Department throughout Nixon's tenure of office. One medium-level Department employee, Richard McLaren, filed an anti-trust suit to have ITT divested of some recently acquired holdings. Although the suit was subsequently dismissed in court, McLaren proceeded anyhow to appeal the verdict. Neither the Attorney General nor the Deputy Attorney General could get him to drop the case, even though the President, who was then hoping to win financial support from ITT for the '72 election, emphatically opposed continuing the suit. Perhaps it is all too easy, at first blush, to side with McLaren, the apparent underdog in the situation. And yet, as Haldeman carefully notes, the suit against ITT was in fact once turned down in a court of law, and so the attempt to appeal the case could be seen as "an act of government harassment against business." In addition, the failure of the Attorney General to make his will prevail following the dismissal of the suit, pointed up the difficulty of Nixon's cabinet appointees in dealing with their bureaucracies.

Haldeman sets the Watergate disaster into the context of Nixon's unsus-

cessful war against the federal civil service. Surrounded by surly and mischievous government workers who resented his intrusion into their affairs, this Republican president looked for ways to run his administration without them. He assigned responsibilities to such confidential advisors as Kissinger and Haldeman; at other times, as in slowing down school desegregation plans, Nixon appealed directly to the people to gain leverage against the HEW. His resort to the Plumbers' unit was at least initially designed to uncover the source of information leaks in the government which were damaging to him and, to what he then felt, was national security. Although these undercover operations would eventually be directed against his personal enemies, their origin, according to Haldeman, lay in his justified perception of a civil service run riot.

Supposedly the "get Nixon" forces prepared for their most savage assault within two months of Nixon's landslide victory in November 1972. The occasion was a decision on the part of the triumphant chief executive to overhaul his own administration. In Summer 1972, the President authorized Roy Ash, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to construct a plan for streamlining the entire executive branch of government. Ash was to reduce the secretarial posts to what seemed a manageable number and to contrive means for ridding the administration of hostile civil servants. Within twenty-four hours of his re-election, Nixon demanded the resignations of a number of his key appointees and by January 1973, had approved a comprehensive plan "for restoring executive power to the President."

Haldeman points to a rapid increase starting in January 1973 in the space devoted to the Watergate break-in in *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and on television news programs. Published reports and editorial comments cited irate politicians and civil servants who linked the Plumbers' operations to Nixon's ultimate goal of becoming a presidential dictator. I believe

that Haldeman is right in examining the furor over Watergate in light of Nixon's attempted shake-up of the Washington bureaucracy. The accusation of creating an imperial presidency belonged to that litany of outrage which emanated from the press and professoriate throughout the period of Nixon's downfall. In fact, the news media had depicted Nixon as tyrannizing over courageous liberal civil servants ever since his publicized dispute with Robert Finch, his first and supposedly most progressive Secretary of HEW. And the adversary press received considerable assistance from its bureaucratic allies when the IRS released information about Nixon's alleged tax evasion in Spring, 1973.

Haldeman repeatedly underscores the ties between the Washington Civil Service and the predominantly liberal news media and Congress. Because of their intimate involvement in carrying out what in recent years have been liberal social policies, the Civil Service can generally count upon the support of

progressive journalists and news announcers. An equally cordial alliance can be shown to exist between federal bureaucrats and the Congress. Haldeman makes the reasonable observation that "The greatest power centers in Washington are the liaisons between Congressional Committee staffs and the Federal bureaucratic departments they deal with."

The Congressional struggle against Nixon involved more than the outraged pride and constitutional concerns of the participants. What also probably upset many anti-Nixon Congressmen was the threat of having their access to an entrenched civil service suddenly cut off by a willful chief executive. Haldeman portrays Nixon and his White House aides as having walked into a den of enemies without the sword of legality to protect them. Although the Nixon administration has now been discredited and removed, the den composed of new class bureaucrats and their numerous myrmidons remains very much intact. □

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture*:

## The Midyear Harvest

"We are repeatedly asked to explain what we mean by the term 'Liberal Culture'—the one combination of words perhaps used most often in these pages. The general impression is that whatever it means, we do not like it. This is correct. So before we venture into subtle reasoning on what we mean by what, something should be forcefully and unequivocally stated: liberalism and the Liberal Culture are not synonymous, not the same, and often, though not very often, at odds—"

from *Comment*

Also:

Opinions & Views — Commendables — In Focus  
Waste of Money — Liberal Culture — Screen  
Journalism — The American Scene  
Polemics & Exchanges

# The Facts of Guilt and Myths of Innocence

Allen Weinstein: *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case*; Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Harold C. Gordon

The Hiss-Chambers case has nagged the American conscience for thirty years. Who lied? Was it Whittaker Chambers, when he accused Alger Hiss of transmitting secret documents through him to the Soviets? Or was it Hiss, when he denied Chambers' accusations? A federal jury believed Chambers, and Hiss was sent to prison for 44 months. But neither he nor his partisans have ever ceased to protest his innocence.

Now a new book has appeared that should satisfy any unprejudiced reader that Hiss was indeed guilty as charged. With *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case*, historian Allen Weinstein has produced the most complete and dispassionate account of the subject ever to appear in print.

His verdict is all the more impressive because he began work in the belief that Hiss was innocent. Five years of exhaustive research persuaded otherwise. In that time, he interviewed scores of surviving actors in the drama, obtained a court order that released more than 40,000 pages of classified FBI files, and was allowed access to the files of the Hiss defense attorneys by order of Hiss himself. In the end, after sifting through the mountain of accumulated evidence, he concluded that Chambers had told the truth and that Hiss had not. "Alger Hiss," he said in a recent interview, "is a victim of the facts."

The Hissophiles have always insisted that he was a victim of a frame. How could a man like Alger Hiss have betrayed his country? A graduate of Harvard Law School, law clerk to Chief Justice Oliver

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Wendell Holmes, and State Department *Wunderkind* who had accompanied FDR to Yalta, he was head of the prestigious Carnegie Endowment for International Peace when Chambers, an ex-Communist who was then a senior editor at *Time* magazine, denounced him to the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1948.

At trial, the prosecution's case rested on two crucial supports: Chamber's testimony that Hiss had been engaged in espionage, and copies of State Department

friendship with Hiss. Chambers testified that Alger and Priscilla Hiss were members of a secret Party cell in Washington when he first encountered them in 1934. From that time, until he broke with Communism in 1938, he and his wife enjoyed a close personal association with the Hisses. Hiss at first disclaimed any acquaintance with Chambers, but later—pressed to explain how a total stranger had acquired a wealth of intimate detail about himself and his family—he "recalled" having briefly known him

"Alger Hiss is one of the greatest assets the Communist Party could possess. What is vindication for him? It is the moment when one of the most respectable old ladies (gentlemen) in Hartford (Conn.) says to another of the most respectable old ladies (gentlemen): 'Really, I don't see how Alger Hiss could brazen it out that way unless he were innocent. Multiply Hartford by every other American community. For the CP, that is victory. That is all it needs. At that moment, confusion is rooted, morale split or sapped, truth poisoned . . . And all that Alger has to do for this victory is to persist in his denials.'"

—Whittaker Chambers to William F. Buckley, Jr., 1954

documents that had been typed on the Hiss Woodstock typewriter. Elaborate hypotheses have been formulated to explain both. Chambers, who died in 1961, has been written off as a liar or a psychopath, driven by twisted motives to destroy an innocent man.

The documents have been ascribed to the work of "sinister forces." Admittedly, they were typed on the Hiss machine, but by whom? Hiss had discarded the Woodstock a decade before he was fingered by Chambers. Anyone could have retrieved it and manufactured the requisite proofs.

Thanks to Dr. Weinstein, we may finally lay these speculations to rest. His findings have served only to underscore the credibility of Chambers, and the incredibility of the various "forgery by typewriter" theories.

Interviews with retired Soviet operatives in Budapest and Jerusalem confirmed Chambers' larger story about life in the Communist "underground" during the 1930's. Depositions filed with the FBI likewise confirmed the story of his

between 1935 and 1936 as a free-lance writer named "George Crosley."

This was a cover-up. What is more, the Hiss files show that his attorneys were aware of it. Not only did their own investigations corroborate details of Chambers' narrative, but defense counsel Charles Cross told Weinstein of a particularly damning revelation that never came out on the witness stand. In January of 1937—months after Hiss claimed he had last seen "Crosley"—the Hiss family's pediatrician made a house call at their residence. She was met at the door by a "very gruff" man who told her, "You may not come in!" In 1949, she recognized the man as Chambers from a newspaper photograph.

Other sources verified the Party affiliation of Alger Hiss and the more serious charge of espionage. Among these were the 1945 disclosures of Igor Gouzenko, a code clerk who defected from the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa. The information he brought with him about spy rings in Canada and the United States caused the FBI to put Hiss under surveillance, which

in turn led to his being "eased out" of the State Department the following year. Weinstein cites recently declassified memoranda indicating that by the spring of 1946, nearly all of the Department's security people suspected Hiss of involvement in some sort of Communist undercover work.

One of Weinstein's biggest finds, however, came from his interview with Czech historian Karel Kaplan. Kaplan had been a member of the Dubcek government's 1968 commission that delved into the purge trials of the late Stalin era. In that capacity, he read the interrogations of Noel and Herta Field by Czech and Hungarian security officials. Field was another State Department plant who had fled to Prague with his wife when the case broke. Both Fields named Hiss as a fellow agent.

Weinstein's research also led him to discount theories that the FBI or some other favorite villain had used the Woodstock typewriter to frame Hiss. Nothing he uncovered in the FBI files gave any credence whatsoever to this possibility. On the other hand, the Hiss files yielded evidence of a deliberate attempt to keep the whereabouts of the machine from the authorities.

The Hisses were evasive in responding to the FBI and Grand Jury probes that followed Chambers' production of the documents in November of 1948. Priscilla could not recall the make of their old typewriter and Alger volunteered that it had "possibly" been an Underwood.

More suspicious were Alger's contradictory statements as to what had become of the machine. On three separate occasions, between December 10 and December 15, he told the Grand Jury that he had absolutely no recollection of its disposal. But on December 4, he had told the FBI that Priscilla had sold it to a second-hand dealer "sometime subsequent to 1938."

Again, Hiss was covering up. According to a letter found by Weinstein, Hiss called one of his lawyers on December 7 to tell him that he remembered giving the Woodstock to the son of his former

housemaid, Claudia Catlett. Thus, while the FBI combed the Washington junkyards and second-hand stores in a vain search for the typewriter, Hiss's brother Donald successfully traced it with the Catletts' help. He did not, however, inform even the Hiss defense that he knew where it could be found. Instead, another lawyer recovered the machine after an independent search. Given the facts, Weinstein concludes that if the Woodstock were ever used in a conspiracy against Hiss, the most likely conspirators would be the maid's son and his own brother.

In the concluding chapters of his book, Weinstein discusses what he calls the Hiss-Chambers "iconography." The case was a pivotal event of our time: it convinced a stunned nation of a domestic Communist threat, it set the stage for Joe McCarthy, and it boosted the career of Richard Nixon through his role as chief inquisitor in the HUAC hearings. For this reason, its political significance quickly overshadowed the central question of whether or not Hiss was guilty. The important difference, implies Weinstein, is that while the conservatives initially turned the *fact* of Hiss's guilt to their advantage, the liberals eventually turned the *myth* of his innocence to theirs.

As the confident anti-communism of the 1950's gave way to the self-doubt of

Vietnam and Watergate, so did public opinion waver on the issue of Alger Hiss. The fall of his old nemesis Nixon, and the numerous exposés that accompanied it, revived interest in his case and made plausible the assertion that he, too, had been the victim of "dirty tricks."

Once more, Hiss found himself in vogue. He was interviewed in *Rolling Stone* by his son Tony, he published a self-serving article on the Op Ed page of the *New York Times*, and he enjoyed great demand as a speaker on college campuses and at left-wing political rallies. In 1975, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts voted unanimously to readmit him to the state bar, the first lawyer ever to be so readmitted following a major criminal conviction. Had it not been for Dr. Weinstein's book, he might now be the subject of one of those TV "docu-dramas" of which historical revisionists are so fond.

At this writing, Hiss continues to proclaim himself innocent of all charges, and vows that he will carry on the struggle to clear his name. Allen Weinstein's scholarship and integrity appear to have dealt a mortal blow to his campaign for vindication. But one should never underestimate the liberal genius for turning the reflections from fun house mirrors into a never-ending saga of a fellow-traveler's honorableness. □

## Commendables

### Old Tired Men and Shabby Ideas

John Lukacs: *1945: Year Zero*;  
Doubleday & Co., Inc.;  
Garden City, New York.

by David Pietrusza

Certain dates jump out at you from the pages of history—1066, 1776, 1789, 1914. John Lukacs, one of America's premier practicing histor-

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ians, contends that 1945 should also be considered as one of the key dates in human progress. For it was then that the traditional European state system gave way to a new global hegemony ruled by two non-European powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

It was a year dominated by personalities—Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt and Truman—and Lukacs' prose portraits of each are revealing and insightful. The virtually omnipotent Roosevelt's vision was muddled and con-

fused, as he naively trusted in his ability to charm "Uncle Joe" Stalin, putting his faith in a worthless United Nations, cavalierly ignoring the warnings of an edgy Churchill. This historical turning-point was dominated by tired and dying men and by the force of shabby and short-sighted ideas. Hitler's trembling frame was declining at an incredible rate. Roosevelt's health had been slipping as early as 1940. "His ability to concentrate was impaired," says Lukacs, "He required ten to twelve hours of sleep. In May 1944, the month before the invasion of Europe, Roosevelt was 'out of bed no more than six hours a day, on his back eighteen.' By January 1945 he could no longer sign his name without difficulty." Churchill was little better, but he lacked the endurance to press his points. After an initial burst of rhetoric, he would become bored, haggle weakly and then give in. Only Stalin and Truman displayed any vigor.

Even more tired than the play's leading men was the ideological script that American foreign policy was reading from. The ghost of Woodrow Wilson's sanctimonious League of Nations-style internationalism lingered over the public consciousness and not only hovered but held total sway over polite society and respectable opinion. A sort of ideological monopoly was granted to it despite its flaccid thought and insupportable assumptions. Roosevelt's *entire* world view was outmoded: "It rested on a view of human nature and of the nature of politics that was a compound of Franklin and Jefferson and Gladstone and Wilson, very much of the nineteenth century, and in many ways more backward than [the Tory] Churchill's."

Both Roosevelt and Churchill felt they could deal with the likes of "a Caucasian bandit" like Stalin, although their approaches were vastly different. Churchill felt a show of strength and some keen horse-trading was in order; he wanted Eisenhower to push on into Berlin and the Soviet occupation areas so as to have something to barter for East European concessions. Roosevelt believed that a display of sincerity and trust was vital. His attitude made Churchill's designs

unworkable.

Lukacs feels that had FDR lived he would not have easily changed his views, at least not as quickly as Truman, who was relatively unencumbered by the Wilsonian ethos. Yet although Truman was mentally free of the gross illusions of his predecessor, his actions did not immediately reflect this change. In part, this was due to the influence of the New Dealers that remained around the White House. In part, it was because of the force of already consummated events, but it could also be traced to the prevailing public opinion toward the Soviets in that fateful year. In 1945, popular journals, such as the *Atlantic Monthly*, still frothed with the most rabid Sovietophilisms. Commentators like Owen Lattimore, Harlow Shapley and Anna Louise Strong were given wide circulation and more moderate souls rushed to keep pace so as to keep in fashion. As Charles Peguy once wrote, "It will never be known what acts of cowardice have been motivated by the fear of not looking sufficiently progressive." □

## Nixon's Lot

Richard Nixon: *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*;  
Grosset & Dunlap; New York.

To tell his truth about recent history and himself, Richard Nixon has written and published a book. The liberal response to it is a slogan circulated by the radic-lib *canards*: "Don't buy books by crooks." Hardly a better symbolism of the Watergate incident could have been conceived. The Nixon haters never seriously intended to discuss truth and untruth with him; in point of fact, it was not the cover-up, but the "imperial" presidency that has always been at issue, and the liberals did not want to debate with Nixon, just to overthrow him. Since 1968 all they craved and dreamed of was a massacre, a *jihad*, a holy war—and Allah provided them with a *casus belli*. Prof. John Kenneth Galbraith, the Imperial Maven of the North-East Realm

fired his salvo in the American-Liberal *Pravda* (The Truth)—*The New York Review of Books*—and he didn't even bother to argue. "That Nixon was a rascal is now generally accepted," he wrote simply. But with seasoned irony he declared himself against boycotting the book "... for reasons of professional pecuniary interest," as well as for presuming that reading Nixon may result in even more hostility. And, quite decently, he added: "... there never was a time when more Americans were expressing themselves more stridently and diversely with so little fear as in the Nixon years," which practically voids the argument against the imperial presidency.

Every American who can still appreciate what Henry Ward Beecher, in a time of more complex moral dilemma, said from the Plymouth pulpit: "Nobody ever sees truth except in fragments—" should buy the Nixon book. Just to make clear that the vulgarity of the liberal terror, though omnipresent in America, is not yet America's conscience. □

## Fecher's Mencken

Charles A. Fecher: *Mencken: A Study of His Thought*;  
Knopf; New York.

Like Mark Twain, H.L. Mencken was neither always right, nor always funny, nor always impressive. But he certainly knew "something" his contemporaries, whatever their intellectual standing, did not. He also had more to say on almost anything than other people did, whatever their credentials and expertise. Those people vehemently questioned and objected to Mencken's utterances, but could do little against Mencken's cognition in itself—unique and plainly vexing to many. Now, from the proper perspective, we clearly see that this idiosyncrasy of perception, formulation and expression constitutes Mencken's bridge to the sages of the past and to his validity in the future. He shares with Twain a keen and elusive knowledge of making Americanism—its

wisdom, follies, triviality and grandeur—a universal phenomenon of prime magnitude and overwhelming attractiveness. Mr. Fecher renders justice to such a conception of Mencken's presence in the American culture. □

## Devine's Warning

Donald J. Devine: *Does Freedom Work? Liberty & Justice in America*; Green Hill Publishers, Inc; Ottawa, Illinois.

Rallying from Irving Kristol's admonition that the intellectual battle over capitalism's moral legitimacy will decide its fate, Donald Devine has written a book to defend the free market. In doing so, he follows the likes of Dicey, Mises, Hayek, Simons and Friedman and once again tries to fathom the intimate connection between political justice and economic justice.

What we learn is that the erosion of our liberty started when we strayed from Adam Smith's premise of limited political liberty. Where Smith confined political justice to the "protection against positive acts of injury," he left the problems of virtue to the private sector. As modern thought has enlarged the political notion of justice to a concern for fairness and equality, a giant welfare state has supplanted an area properly reserved for the workings of Smith's social virtue.

The author argues that the problems of welfare and social integration are more justly resolved through the free market system than through government programs. Where market solutions are not enough for the "disadvantaged" to achieve "true social justice," Professor Devine pleads the necessity for a liberated association sector so that the forces of organized and individual altruism can once again provide virtue compatible with America's political justice.

Devine's ample use of supporting statistical data, at times, seems more hopeful than convincing. Fields which are immensely complex and difficult to gauge, such as religion, the family, materialism, social values and public policy, are

examined largely with the use of opinion polls, a sometimes deceiving method of measure.

Yet, whether or not America's support for traditional family and moral values is as strong as Devine contends, he correctly cautions us that the continuing lack of support from the intellectual class (especially the media) for these values might undermine their standing with the general populace. And it is here that Devine sees a grave danger which must be averted by the capitalistic system in order for it to survive. □

## Morgan's Choice

Ted Morgan (Sanche de Gramont): *On Becoming American*; Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Upon being addressed as *Citoyen* (citizen), after 1789, the Marquis de Lafayette

shuddered, and the Marquis de Mirabeau, of much shorter pedigree, reached for his epee. Before he changed his name to Ted Morgan, Count Sanche de Gramont claimed a genealogy whose length rivaled that of Lafayette. He did not care for it. He decided that being an American meant more than roots. He changed his name and applied for American citizenship.

For centuries, the French aristocracy's two claims to eminence were their sense of cerebral pleasures and of elegance. These two human inclinations now take refuge in America, having fled Europe where wealthy youths kill randomly with impunity while claiming they're defending the simple folk who hate them, where grubbiness pretends to the status of antique, where Pall Mall and Boulevard St. Michel turn into progressive slums. From his book, it is quite visible that Mr. Morgan has a special feel for deep spiritual transformations, and a full conviction that he made the proper one. □

## In Focus

### Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

Martin Anderson: *Welfare: The Political Economy of Welfare Reform in the United States*;

Hoover Institution Press; Stanford, California.

by Richard A. Vaughan

During a briefing of reporters concerning his planned welfare reform package, President Carter said, "the complexity of the welfare system is almost incomprehensible."

Carter's expressed bafflement with an overwhelming bureaucratic labyrinth revealed more than the mere complexity of modern social policies. It was, in essence, an expression of frustration that the President himself should be powerless

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against a virtually autonomous and politically unaccountable welfare bureaucracy. And it is within the context of this frightening reality that the underlying theme of *Welfare* is set: "The domestic side of the federal government had gotten so big that it was literally impossible to grasp it, intellectually, in its entirety. The result is that you must depend on the bureaucracy that is there when you arrive."

And that is exactly what Carter was forced to do. Shrewdly manipulated by HEW bureaucrats, Carter has been compelled to push for a welfare reform that was his only in principle. The President's initial goal of no cost increase above the present system was abandoned after Joseph Califano's warning of its political impossibility. And inevitably Carter authorized Califano and Secretary of Labor Marshall to develop the welfare proposals according to their *own* outlines:

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"By then Carter had no choice. Like his predecessors, he had become politically committed to a course over which he no longer had control . . . the specifics of the program . . . went out of his hands and into those of the HEW professionals."

These professionals, in turn, are the same bureaucrats who served up the radical welfare plans of Nixon (Family Assistance Plan) and Ford (Income Supplement Plan), and are now determined to institute a guaranteed income plan under the guise of welfare reform which could prove to be, as the author puts it, "a social revolution of great magnitude."

Martin Anderson, an advisor to Presidents Nixon and Ford, and to Governor Ronald Reagan, rejects radical welfare reform (liberal and conservative alike) because of its political impossibility. It can never satisfy the three integral components of a welfare program: a minimum level of welfare benefits, the retention of financial incentives to work, and an overall cost that is politically acceptable to the taxpayers. Anderson suggests that, instead, we follow a moderate seven point outline of "practical" welfare reform that builds on existing programs.

Proponents of conservative welfare reform, like Anderson, start with the disadvantage of facing a bureaucracy favoring radical welfare reform, making the fight not so much a struggle of opposing theories as it is a fight against the institutional bias of a bureaucracy well-placed to manipulate information and the media, and armed with the primary access to sophisticated computers. And once the bureaucracy gets the administration committed to a radical welfare plan, chances are it will stick to that plan.

Anderson's battle with radical reformers is fueled largely by his opening thesis that "the 'war on poverty' has been won." Even though the Executive branch has been overstating the level of poverty by as much as four times its actual figure, he claims that through strong economic growth, massive welfare and income transfer, the number of poor in America

has been reduced to 3% of the population. Such explosive social improvement, while eliminating poverty, has created a new caste of "dependent Americans" who face a "poverty wall" of high tax rates that destroys economic incentives to work. With as much as 10% of the nation already almost totally dependent on the state, Anderson warns that Carter's new welfare reform proposal, at an increased cost of \$20 billion a year, and adding 22 million more Americans to the welfare rolls, would be an unavoidable disaster. □

## Welty's Tributes

Eudora Welty: *The Eye of the Story: Selected Essays and Reviews*; Random House; New York.

It is her fondness for her subjects which makes Eudora Welty's latest collection of stories and essays an instructive piece on the nature of literary criticism. Whether she turns her talents on the fictional Ida M'Toy, an elderly black midwife-turned-second-hand-clothing-dealer, or the writings of William Faulkner, Miss Welty displays a keen appreciation and a loving touch. It is this quality which softens her as a critic and makes her, more accurately, an appreciator. In a recent interview Miss Welty admitted to only writing about "something that strikes my imagination or that I can admire." In one of her essays she describes the usual effect of literary criticism: ". . . to destroy, rather than make for a real—that is, imaginative—understanding of the author." Thus she confronts the dilemma of dealing analytically with her favorite works without destroying their magic. On Henry Green she says, "I could say that 'Concluding' is like Venus on a clear evening going down over water, and if you agreed—still worse if you disagreed—where are we now?"

Although Miss Welty is a favorite of the literary orthodoxy, she has always been independent from the center of opinion. This independence is based on

a firm self-confidence. She is sure of her instincts, and for good reason. Her acute insights into writing, criticism and life serve her—and us, her readers—well. Her fiction is full of charm. And her reviews and essays contain gems such as: "I believe there must be such a thing as sentimental hate." Or: "Writing of what you know has nothing to do with security: what is more dangerous?" □

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## Waste of Money

## Woods' Stiffness

Donald Woods: *Biko*; Paddington Press; New York.

That Donald Woods expects the blacks to take over South Africa within five years should come as no surprise: for years he has supported efforts to bring South African blacks to power by whatever force necessary. However, to call history to witness by proclaiming such developments "inevitable" does not alter the violent character of the program espoused by the revolutionary opponents of the present regime. But it does point out the optical illusion (to use Schiller's phrase) necessary to make it fit in with our perception of the rest of the African political reality.

That Donald Woods might succumb to such visions of historical necessity is understandable; but the complicity of the American media critics who intone paeans to the Bikos of the world while carrying on an active campaign of creative ignorance towards the equally inevitable terror, massacres, and oppression which will characterize the regimes of the revolutionary pretenders—such benign and intentional neglect is inexcusable, and hardly worthy of a "free" press.

That Donald Woods does not labor to point out the well-documented records of blacks already mutilated and terrorized by the black revolutionaries in their attempt to stifle all black competition is, again, understandable. The emotional, almost frantic tone of his book reflects

his need to tell a very personal story. But that the sage and measured tones of the talk-show moguls and evening news magnates arbitrarily elevate Woods to a heroic rating while relegating the rest of the truth—about 99% of the story—to the cutting-room floor, really enhances the agony involved in the African dilemma: Woods, a white opponent of the white regime, receives a welcoming em-

brace from our American media, while Jeremiah Chirau, a moderate Rhodesian Senator and black tribal chieftan, was refused a visa by our State Department. In the media silence following this incident you could almost hear that inevitable tread of terror descending on the blacks of southern Africa when Mr. Wood's *compañeros* came to establish the new social and moral order. □

## The American Scene

### Defense

A new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has been instated by President Carter. He is David C. Jones, a U.S. Air Force general. He displays a keen understanding of the country he is expected to defend. According to *Time*, when a USAF airperson won a nude beauty contest in Florida, causing some unfashionable consternation in the upper echelons of the flying establishment, Gen. Jones annulled the problem: "Well, she wasn't in uniform, was she?"

### Postscript

In the book *The Children of the Counterculture*, John Rothchild and Susan Berns Wolf checked over various communes, collectives, and expanded "families," the legacy of the glorious, revolutionary '60s. The *New York Post* sums up their findings:

"What they found in many of the communities were children who were neglected and abused, victims of treatment that would be judged cruel by most parents. The authors were struck by the boredom, apathy and melancholy of the children, many of whom showed signs of emotional disturbance and psychological disorganization . . . In a

number of the rural communes, the parents seemed bent mainly on keeping the children out of their way. Themselves still children, they sought gratification without sacrifice, as if it were possible to deal with the young without fully accepting their presence in our lives."

### Values

"When I was growing up you respected your parents. If they told you to be home at a certain time, then you were home. Today people think differently—they act differently. Poor people used to have shined shoes and combed hair—now they go out on the street looking any which way. They are filthy, they use profanity, they don't respect their elders. It's just a new era. I call this the 'Dope Era.' But things are going to change. It takes time, but life goes in cycles. We need stricter laws, a different kind of court system. Then people will change and this chaos will stop . . . people will regain their initiative and their values. It's just a matter of time."

These are the words of Mr. Les Matthews, 57, a black journalist from Manhattan, a staff contributor to *The Amsterdam News*, Harlem's modern-day Damon Runyon. *Village Voice* called him, in a profile, a "sentimentalist." □

### Hope

Some heartening opinions about moviemaking from John Milius, an up-and-coming young filmmaker, known for the naturalism of his scriptwriting:

"Look at *Julia*. It's preachy, liberal preachy, a female macho film . . . If you want to see the difference between generations, look at the differences between any of our movies and *Black Sunday* or *Marathon Man*. They're violent, yet they're liberal; they're chic, yet they're exploitative. They're really foul movies by the Bel Air circuit. It's easy to be cynical. It's hard to be corny."

Not long ago a 33-year-old man, Paul Schumacher of East Meadow, N.Y., saw a 65-year-old woman being attacked by a mugger. He gave chase, was stabbed in the following fight, helped the woman up, said to her: "I have your bag, madam . . ." and died of his wounds. How about a movie about this little incident? The Liberal Culture critics would certainly call it corny. They hailed *Bonnie and Clyde* or Robert Altman's *Thieves Like Us*, as deep, humane and morally enriching.

### Something Is Rotten in the State of Denmark

The June 15, 1978 issue of the *Rolling Stone* contains:

- a piece by Mr. Patrick Buchanan
- some pictures which clearly allude to, but not unveil, Mr. John Travolta's masculinity as an antidote to both homo- and bisexuality.

Someone aptly said that the rock subculture of the last decade was concocted out of threat, excess and androgyny. Mr. Buchanan embodies persuasiveness and moderation in today's world. Mr. Travolta seems to millions to be the fierce opposite of androgyny. What has happened to *Rolling Stone*? Ideological confusion? Or looking forward to new profits from the old/new (conservative?) values? □

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## Stage

### A Ballet Ensemble on a Couch

*A Chorus Line*; conceived, choreographed and directed by Michael Bennett; written by James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante; music by Marvin Hamlisch.

Analyzing individuals—one of the magic ablutions of our pseudo-rational age—is old hat by now. The same Voodoo ritual, allegedly scientific, but only updated, when applied to a collective seems something new, thus interesting or exciting by the standards of modern theatrical values. That is what happens during this spectacle: a choreographic director, assembling a cast for a new musical, begins by asking the applicants to tell him about themselves. They instantly turn into analysts. Some spout shallow clichés about their repressions and anxieties, others tell amusing stories about their experiences. Through beautifully timed techniques, like fragmented dialogues or desynchronized verbal exchanges, they respond in unison to the director's questions, as all they have on their minds is one nagging urge: to get the job. Their communication with the director is impulsive and is translated into excellent choreography. Adorned by the most innovative and imaginative stage setting contemporary Broadway has to offer (the scenery consists solely of an inventively operated mirror background and lighting), this musical rings truer than anything in the rich past of the genre.

Even its attempt to concentrate on the "Me Generation's" psychological cant and stereotypes fails to deprive it of that peculiar American intensity which might be called cultural imperialism. Its success makes the anti-Americanism abroad helpless, and accounts for the bizarre fact that even those who burn American libraries, or paint "Yankee Go Home!" slogans, do so while clad in blue jeans and refreshed with Coca Cola. Like pre-

vious generations, the one in *Chorus Line*, even if amusingly solipsistic, addresses itself to human affairs in a uniquely American way — without excessive profundity, or salutary skepticism, but with endless sympathy, empathy and the will to help. Many think that because the laws of work, market and competition often interfere with the best of human impulses that the so-called American system is to be blamed for many hard facts of life. Though defending the Amer-

ican system is the last thing its authors and producers have in mind, *Chorus Line* extends evidence to the contrary. Not all of the young people we come to like will get the job — their dramatic goal during this mini-drama; some will get nothing for their splendid and ardent performances. The final selection is a prelude to the excellence of a future production — somewhere, sometime. And that's what Americanism of almost every stripe is all about. (ES) □

## Screen

### Subtle Filth and Salvation through Platitude

*Pretty Baby*; directed by Louis Malle; written by Polly Platt; Paramount Pictures.

*An Unmarried Woman*; written and directed by Paul Mazursky; 20th Century Fox.

by Eric Shapearo

This movie, unintentionally, offers a trenchant metaphor. It represents a microclimate in which a child has no chance to live her childhood. We watch a preteen girl being robbed of that crucial component of her life. The consequences of her ultimate introduction to womanhood and whoredom at the age of 12 are unforeseeable, and the movie is not concerned with them. To us, the viewers, they loom as rather grim. Those who created the movie perpetrate the crime they have dispassionately depicted: Mr. Malle and Ms. Platt would vehemently deny this, but putting their work into a contemporary context, the double-leveled metaphoric sense of the movie becomes

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*Mr. Shapearo reads from Spinoza or Montaigne before reviewing a movie.*

painfully clear. In our world of vandalized sexual feelings, childhood becomes the prime victim. The movie is R-rated, children under 17 have only to be accompanied by parents to devour the glamorized fate of Violet, the incredibly beautiful child-whore. Many parents in today's America will consider it an act of enlightenment and progress to serve this movie to their children. How the images of *Pretty Baby* will influence their lives remains to be seen. All we know now is that, in the climate of the utterly permissive atrophy of criteria of the late '70s, Malle's movie both tells and makes the story. It is a part of the never-ending production of human clichés by *Zeitgeist*. A dimwitted New York film critic wrote on *Pretty Baby* that the movie "received a barrage of invectives from do-gooders and know-nothings—" and added that it "inevitably" disappoints for its "approach is cool, almost chaste—the big shock is the lack of explicit sex." This is a particularly odious stance. We have always known that the cinema embellishes anything it touches, that it induces to dreaming and imitation; that film imagery is didactic in an uncontrollable

way. Childishly inane and mimicked lasciviousness looks different through the treacherous intermediary of the camera, and finds its way to immature impulses and aspirations. Couched in the stunning artistry of photographer Sven Nykvist—a visual fiesta of lushness and depth, the New Orleans background flora rendered in the images of a latter-day Douanier Rousseau—it will have no difficulty in finding aping followers who later in life will have Mr. Malle to thank for conditioning their early reveries.

The literary texture of the movie is surprisingly flat, plastic and glossy in a cheap way. No truth about time, place, human condition is conveyed, no drama or comedy can be sensed, no thrill or sorrow, chagrin, or exhilarating giddiness, is extracted from the tepid fingering of the sexual chores. The narrative sounds dismally hollow, perhaps because the dramatics of whoredom are inseparable from the sense of sin: if such a sense is lacking there's no drama in the lot of a whore—hers is just a one-dimensional experience, untouched by any existential alternative. For two millennia we have known that whoredom can be redeemed, can even bring spiritual deliverance—and this is an old story by now. We also know that whoredom glamorized, or presented as fun, even if it is wrapped in smart-alecky, cool hipness, signals obtuse artificiality. Besides, Ernest Bellocq, a factual character, who at the turn of the century photographed prostitutes in New Orleans (as if enamored by their ill-shaped bodies and enigmatic facial expressions) was a midget, impotent, and might be seen as Storyville's "Hunchback of Notre Dame." In *Pretty Baby*, Keith Carradine transmogrifies him into a character suitable for a *Harper's Bazaar* promotion of Yves St. Laurent campy apparel. Accordingly, his motif in the tale has the literary value of a *Playboy* magazine feature.

So, what's left is the story of Violet, on and off screen. In the first rendition, her overwhelming beauty brings unnamed malaises. Brooke Shields, a pre-teen actress who knows all and does all for money's sake—and speaks about it

quite cynically in interviews—breeds in us a feeling of tangible disgust in the face of such awful waste. We might have been aware, while watching little Shirley Temple or the teenage Elizabeth Taylor, that their early exposed prettiness was partly a distortion or abuse of character and ego, but watching them never induced a feeling of corruptness or loss. Brooke Shield's triumphant loveliness, thrown into a world where nothing really matters, neither childhood's integrity, nor human dignity, too easily mixes with our revulsion: dragging *our* acceptance of *her* beauty through the lower depths of human experience somehow soils us. So does the recognition that the artist or writer feels no obligation to anything but glamor, so striking in Mr. Malle's endeavor. It's common knowledge that anything, whether imbecility or filth, can be prettified with *Vogue's* techniques, fashioned into spurious refinement, and, finally, sold to cosmeticians and popular magazines, as objects of envy for nameless masses. *New York Magazine* wrote that Brooke Shields' "redeeming" value lies in her power of "attracting attention." Even if such a judgment is meant as irony, it is an invitation to mass approval, even mass imitation. Countervailing the lures of jaded exposure seems as unthinkable these days as a good word for Hitler. But skepticism about innocence is one thing, and its exploitation another. Refinement culled from cold speculations on what knowing too much too soon debases a society even more than orgies in suburban split-levels. Sodom is more a readiness to pay for tickets than collective copulation.

As in a glittering lens, *Pretty Baby* embodies what's most repulsive and base in today's Liberal Culture—the cold, heartless and, ultimately fatuous fascination with the alleged supra-humanness of the abominable. This movie serves the sophistication of the visual; bringing out the superficial, the paltry, the banal from the human soul and from life while pretending to subtlety and intellectual gratification. It reveals nothing about human perspectives. It lacks any ability to give shape and color to human pains

and failures, to locate the unchangeable human center, which is unidentifiable other than through art and which has always been the same.

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In this movie, a man blubbers and a woman vomits. That is not to say that a man's sobbing, or a woman's throwing up, are inadmissible components of a drama. As reactions to the complexities of married life, however, they do not constitute much of a symbol. In this movie, however, they are lifted to symbol status.

Andrew Sarris, considered by many a well-balanced New York film critic, called *An Unmarried Woman* "the best American movie I have seen in several years." It's an opinion which says something about both Mr. Sarris and the American movies of the last several years. I won't pass judgment on Mr. Sarris' taste, but if he meant that the American movies of the said period were rather rubbishy, I wholeheartedly concur. Yet, why this movie, which is about people who do not use their mental equipment to process the empirical data of their own existence, can be considered as the best of them is a puzzle.

The idea of cause-and-effect and, consequently, the method of rational anticipation, seem absent from the psychological apparatus of Mazursky's characters. The heroine, rather mature at 36, does not presuppose, but *discovers*, that a separation after 16 years of a rather successful marriage means loneliness. Naturally, as the movie is strongly pro-feminist but not necessarily pro-woman, she turns for help to a female psychoanalyst. The outpouring of platitudes dispensed by the latter immediately informs us, in the audience, that the shrink is a consummate idiot, and that her assistance may prove lethal rather than salubrious. We nurse the hope that, perhaps, this is a deft satire on the psychotherapeutical profession, but this is not the case; neither the director/writer, nor the protagonist (named Erica) seem to notice the analyst's insipidity. Thus, the

more Erica becomes unmarried, the more cluckish she looks to us.

With each reel we flounder more deeply in the jelly-like reality of poses—New York, contemporary, metropolitan, East Side—also called lifestyles these days. The movie brings no news about them, except, perhaps, it makes their overwhelming shallowness more perceptible. Once again it's Blondie, this time putting the blame for an everyday flop on menstruation or breast size. The final message is multifaceted: bed is the only testing ground of humanness, where neither communicative allusion nor embarrassment exist; independence is a burden, but it's better than sharing fates; the world is created by the *fiat* of *Ms. Magazine* and infested with men who all, with only one exception, act like Pavlovian sex dogs. The exception is an artist, presented as sensitive, famous and wealthy, although after we are permitted to see his paintings we wonder how he managed to sell even one of them. His patrons must be those who buy Mr. Mazursky's "sensitivity," "humor" and "insight." □

## Journalism

### TNAR's Good Start

A new non-liberal journal made its appearance on the national scene not long ago, and its four issues have promise. It is a bimonthly published in Cranford, New Jersey. It calls itself *The New American Review*, and has obviously conservative sympathies. It features well-known names, both on its masthead and in its text, and good articles signed by lesser-known names, which is a good omen, for we know what to expect from van den Haags, Kirks and Molnars, but it is refreshing to read interesting things by new people.

The general tone of *TNAR* can be described as a serious discourse of nonsense matters. Its engaging characteristic is that there is little politics in it, and more of everything else. The editors

of *TNAR* seem to be aware of politics' waning significance in the crucial struggle for the survival of Western civilization. *TNAR*'s publisher, Mr. Allen Weakland, wrote in the January issue:

"While average men may not be aware of the world of ideas, which they consider to be 'too far over their heads,' there is a constant filtering through of philosophical and cultural ideas via society's middlemen—the television producers, cinema directors, and various popularizers of high culture images and ideas."

And he adds:

"Probably the major repellent keeping twentieth century conservatives aloof from the cultural arena is that conservatives envision the arts as cesspools of ideology."

It is clear that *TNAR* has firmly decided not to sustain such attitudes. □

### *New York Times'* Talmudism

There has been a continuing debate over the appointment of a self-avowed Marxist scholar by the name of Bertell Ollman to the chairmanship of Maryland University's Department of Government, and whether it would be the American thing to do. The subtlest argument for installing Mr. Ollman in office comes from a *New York Times* editorial which reveals that he has invented and patented a new board game entitled "Class Struggle," formed a company, Class Struggle, Co., and is now making money on imbuing innocent players with the frustrations and futility of capitalism. This, concludes the *Times*, is:

"... a clear sign that he is, for practical purposes, safely devoted to the system that ... the vigilantes in the [Maryland]

Legislature are so anxious to protect."

We can't help wondering what method of argumentation the *Times*' editorialists would devise to explain the elimination from the faculty posts of professors who merely asserted their conservative persuasions by the more traditional means of scholarship. □

## *New York Magazine's* Communist Propaganda

In the April 14 issue of *New York Magazine*, the jewel in Rupert Murdoch's arch-capitalist empire, we read a mammoth feature on Angela Davis as an incarnation of wisdom, virtue and beauty. The homework was done by an in-house writer, a certain Orde Coombs, and its message was that blacks in America are turning toward communism. The ultimate authorities on the pro-communist tidal wave were Ms. Vertamac Smart-Grosvenor, Mr. Ellis Haizlip and Mr. Peter Bailey. Prof. Thomas Sowell, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Mr. Ken Norton and Secretary Patricia Harris were not consulted. Nor was the black American citizen who had recently returned from Cuba and declared at the airport that he preferred to spend his life in a U.S. jail rather than Fidel Castro's communist "freedom." □

### *Criticon's* Message

Whenever West German publications are featured in the U.S. press, their flashy and imitative aspect comes first to the fore. It's therefore a pleasure to notice that the old and genuinely German virtue of blending the laborious with the assiduously accurate and exhaustive is still alive and well in Munich in the form of a bimonthly, *Criticon*—an unabashedly conservative journal. Published by Messrs. Casper von Schrenck-Notzing and Hanns Klatz, *Criticon* is conceived and edited in the best tradition of German

journalism in which precision is never divorced from knowledge. This tradition ran into an existential trap with the arrival of Joseph Goebbels on the German publishing scene: as we remember, several years of welding the sense of precision to the most vicious mythomania ensued—and the rest is history.

Periodicals like *Criticon* contribute immensely to erasing these sorrowful

memories from humanity's awareness. Writing about the press in Bundesrepublik, *Criticon's* commentator observes: "The freedom of the press [is] a fearfully preserved privilege of the left-liberal social caste. Nobody has more painfully experienced his privilege than the conservatives."

As with all sores, it is comforting to know that one's afflictions are universal. □

*bon-vivant*, when asked about child-molesting, asserts in an interview:

"What happens with free accord can be hardly called corrupt. As for what is a minor, my God, adolescents are going into puberty at 9, 10, 11 . . . I see nothing wrong with willing relationships between men and boys . . ."

He gets unexpected support from the Sunday family magazine *Parade* in which, true to its old counseling traditions, we read of late:

"If you take your child [who exhibits homosexual tendencies] to a psychiatrist or psychologist, choose one who is gay or specializes in counseling gays . . ."

## Liberal Culture

### Publishers

E.P. Dutton Co., a New York publishing house in business since 1852, has a long list of pro-communist and radical books on its record. Of late, the firm has decided to shed its rigid, doctrinaire, inhuman, overpoliticized image and assume a more relaxed posture, in keeping with the Liberal Culture's triumphs during the last decade. A representative item: *The End Product: The Last Taboo*—a treatise about excrement—is described by the publishers as "the perfect book for the bathroom." It carries an introduction by Abby Rockefeller, David Rockefeller's daughter, a celebrated authority on the subject. The *Washington Post* informs: "*End Product's* dust jacket shows an enamel cornucopia, a toilet overflowing with fresh vegetables and fruits. The jacket makes this point: excrement and nourishment are really the same thing."

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William Morrow Co., a younger and more enterprising company, also Dr. William Kunstler's (see Moral Leaders) publisher, has brought out *Sex Without Shame* by a Dr. Alayne Yates, a pediatrician and psychiatrist from Los Angeles. Dr. Yates strongly, even insistently, recommends masturbation for children from the first year of their existence, sexual initiation of toddlers, encouraging sexual activities in pre-school kids, parental and sibling incest as sources of joy and felicity. But liberal publishers

are not the only ones who seem to adore Dr. Yates, so do liberal journalists. A nationally syndicated one has interviewed her, and reports that she knows "a 4-year-old boy who had intercourse with a 6-year-old girl and neither seemed damaged by it," dutifully conveying this brilliant research to the millions of readers. How Dr. Yates knows what a woman will feel at the age of 30 by observing her at the age of six remains a matter of her own scientific standards. Even harder to understand is what she means by the word "damage." But the portrait of Dr. Yates, adorning her interview in the lib-cultural newspapers, discloses a sort of glimmer in her eyes which her colleagues, other psychiatrists, might find disturbing.

### Gurus

Mr. Gore Vidal, famous author and

### Moral Leaders

*New Times*, a lib-cultural organ, reports, with approbatory relish, on an idyllic scene from the life of Dr. William Kunstler, the professional conscience of America and the focal point of pro-communist emotions:

"He was sitting at home in his Gay Street brownstone, feeding his 14-month-old daughter, Sarah. He had been improvising a dinnertime story. 'Then the little girl did fellatio upon the lion,' he said, spooning more baby food into Sarah's mouth."

## Polemics & Exchanges

### The Fallibility of Meaning Well

by John Hastings

The embarrassment of Ms. Vanessa Redgrave's appearance at this year's Academy Awards was but one more instance of the muddle-headed pseudo-politico-ideological blubber to

*Mr. Hastings, of New York City, is a life-long student of the liberal double-standard mystique.*

which we have been subjected for too many years. The tolerance Americans have for this kind of thing would seem to suggest that the half-baked is excusable if it's "well-meaning." Which is to say: ignorance is not merely acceptable but perhaps even to be praised if its heart has an ardent beat.

The fact that this form of public self-humiliation is far from new does nothing

to relieve its tiresomeness. One may ask, should it be tolerated?—and one can only, wearily, acknowledge that, as the price of “free speech” (which cannot be withheld even from certified morons), it should. That it should not be rebutted is another matter. And that it has not been rebutted with much effectiveness is but one more. One finds oneself burning to point out that Israel is still a tiny nation fighting for survival against tremendously powerful adversaries, of which the U.S.S.R. is merely the most powerful, and that the Palestinian cause has, say what you will, been converted into a weapon of annihilation against that small and vulnerable state. But such is probably fruitless effort. We would do better to spend the time improving our understanding of the international political circumambience in which so disheartening a spectacle as Ms. Redgrave’s is possible.

The crucible dates back many years even before Ms. Lillian Hellman, but Ms. Hellman would seem to have become the archetype for our time of this genre of rigidly pro-leftist partisanship. She was the first in a succession of female activists that has included, among many others such as Joan Baez and Shirley MacLaine, Jane Fonda and Ms. Redgrave—the ladies who could always see the horrors on one side but suddenly turned astigmatic when horrors turned up on the other. Soweto visible but never Gulag, McCarthy but never Stalin, Nixon but never Hiss, tiger cages in Saigon but never the decimation of village leaders ordered and committed by Hanoi and the Vietcong, napalm dropped on babies by American fliers over Vietnam but never hunger-and-death forced marches conducted by North Vietnamese conquerors, Watergate but never the Symbionese Liberation Front, and now, supposedly, “Zionist hoodlums” and not the PLO massacre of the innocents in a bus in Israel. This steely-stony one-track partisanship is more vicious than it-all-depends-whose-ox-is-being-gored dishonesty: it is intellectual travesty, moral bankruptcy and bone-deep philosophical self-perjury.

Think back to Lillian Hellman’s apologetics for the infamous Moscow Trials of the ’30s, her support of the Communist-controlled international Waldorf conference of ’49, her untiring efforts to exculpate “the Hollywood Ten” while scorning even to mention, much less be appalled by, the crimes of the totalitarian regime defended and promoted by the “ten.” But what would seem to typify Ms. Hellman’s intellectual integrity was her play, “The Searching Wind,” which some will remember from its brief run on Broadway in the early days of WWII. The principal message of it was that the rise of Fascism and Nazism was chiefly the fault of corrupt upper-class Americans in Europe. When one’s frame of mind is so rigidly doctrinaire it is perhaps no surprise that, with the exposure of one’s previous political statements as

fallacious, one would still continue to refuse to admit one was wrong. A trail has been blazed which was to be assiduously followed down the ensuing years by the sorority of which Ms. Lillian Hellman has been so liberally befogged a house mother.

A recently published posthumous book by Hannah Arendt bewails the prevalent absence in our society of creative thinking. Faced with the ilk of callow and narrowly partisan sententiousness, one can only echo the Arendt lament for our continuing ratiocinative failures by posing the question: Is it too much to ask of those who have reached prominence in public life to first take the trouble to inform themselves of the truth of what they would tell us and above all have the honesty to voice the whole truth? □

## Civility in *The New Republic* and Logic that Shines from the *Washington Star*

A letter was recently sent to *The New Republic* magazine protesting a sentence in an article by Mr. Henry Fairlie, a distinguished English emigré. Mr. Fairlie stated that American conservatives, who by nature should have developed aristocratic instincts, turned out rather to be hypocritical populists, while American liberals, who for so long claimed to represent the soul of the people, wound up with a variety of elitist proclivities in their character. To make it clearer, Mr. Fairlie sketched a list of presently prominent neo-conservatives, and passed a judgment: “But these are honorable men.” As both conjunction and preposition, *but* is used here to assert that conservatives are, as a rule, dishonorable men with some exceptions. This assertion was protested in a letter. The letter was never printed.

There is a peculiar logic that regulates the use of the word *conservative* in the inclement environment of today’s media. Not long ago a *Washington Star* book reviewer, wishing to express disapproval

of Paul Johnson’s *Enemies of Society*, wrote:

“The pillars [of our civilization] he [Johnson] says are a brief in moral absolutes: the notion that . . . violence is always wrong; democracy as the least evil form of government; the rule of law; the importance of the individual . . . a healthy middle class; political and economic freedom; exactness in language; the trustworthiness of science; and, finally, the ceaseless pursuit of truth. All this may sound like pretty conservative stuff, but Johnson cannot be so easily categorized: he was the editor of the British liberal weekly *The New Statesman* . . . and he doesn’t fit into any of the traditional right-wing molds.”

Pretty conservative stuff indeed, no one would deny that. If not with political fortunes, the conservatives these days at least seem to be blessed with brilliant critics. □

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